

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, ELAB, CA

SUBJ: CANADAIK TO BUILD LEAR EXECUTIVE JET

1. MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE JEAN CHRETIEN ANNOUNCED IN MONTREAL OCTOBER 29 THAT FEDERAL CABINET HAD GIVEN GOVERNMENT-OWNED CANADAIK LTD. GO-AHEAD FOR DOLS 1.2 BILLION AIRCRAFT PROJECT, WHICH WILL PROVIDE AT LEAST 1,500 NEW JOBS IN MONTREAL PLANT. PROJECT IS TO BUILD NEW EXECUTIVE AIRCRAFT, LEARSTAR 600. CANADAIK HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT ALREADY HAS 53 FIRM ORDERS FOR THE DOLS 5 MILLION AIRCRAFT, AND THAT IT PRESENTLY EXPECTS A TOTAL PRODUCTION RUN OF 250.

2. AS RESULT OF LEARSTAR PROGRAM, CANADAIK'S PRESENT WORK FORCE OF 1,800 WILL BE INCREASED TO 3300, STILL WELL BELOW EMPLOYMENT LEVEL OF MORE THAN 10,000 SEVERAL YEARS AGO, BEFORE CANADIAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY HIT BY RECESSION. CHRETIEN ALSO NOTED THAT CANADAIK WOULD BENEFIT FROM CANADIAN PURCHASE OF DOLS 1 BILLION OF AIRCRAFT FROM LOCKHEED, AS OFFSET ARRANGEMENTS HAD ASSURED CANADAIK OF CONTRACT FOR PART OF WORK, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR 700 MORE PEOPLE. CANADAIK PRESIDENT FRED KEARNS SAID THAT IN TWO AND HALF YEARS, CANADAIK'S WORK FORCE SHOULD BE UP TO ABOUT 4,500 EMPLOYEES.

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3. WHILE KEARNS DENIED THAT TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT HAD ANYTHING

TO DO WITH QUEBEC ELECTIONS, SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER CLAUDE FORGET, THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE FOR ST. LAURENT RIDING IN WHICH CANADAIR FACTORY IS LOCATED, WAS ON HAND FOR ANNOUNCEMENT. AS CANADAIR'S OPTION TO ANNOUNCE ITS DECISION ON LEAR PROJECT EXPIRED NOV. 1, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT GOVERNMENT WAITED UNTIL LAST MOMENT, WITH EYE COCKED IN DIRECTION OF POSSIBLE POLITICAL BENEFITS, ESPECIALLY SINCE FORGET IS EXPECTED TO FACE STIFF BATTLE TO RETAIN HIS SEAT. IN ANY EVENT, ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW JOBS COMES AS GOOD NEWS IN PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE APPROACHES 9 PERCENT.
HARPER

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